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ABSTRACT

A survey on parents' attitudes about school effectiveness in the early childhood and elementary programs was conducted in the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, City School District. All students in grades K4 through 5 were given surveys to take home; 3,328 surveys were returned. The survey measured parental attitudes toward six dimensions of school effectiveness: (1) home-school relations; (2) clear school mission; (3) high expectations; (4) a safe and orderly environment; (5) instructional leadership; and (6) frequent monitoring of student progress. Findings indicate that relatively few parents gave negative marks to the Harrisburg City Schools. Parents who expressed an opinion gave the schools positive marks by more than a four to one margin. More than 60 percent of parents gave the elementary schools positive marks on all scales except the scale on instructional leadership. Parents were 70 percent positive on the frequent monitoring of student progress scale, 65 percent positive on the safe and orderly environment scale, 69 percent positive on the clear school mission scale, 52 percent positive on the instructional leadership scale, and 62 percent positive on the home-school relations scale. Recommendations for improvement are offered. The survey and related materials are appended. (RH)

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Final Report

Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness in
The Harrisburg City School District's
Elementary Division

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Submitted to:

The Harrisburg City School District
Mr. Donald Carroll, Superintendent
Miss Norma Gotwalt,
Director of Elementary Education

Conducted by:

The Pennsylvania State University at Harrisburg
The Capital College
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Date:

June 7, 1989

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness in The Harrisburg City School District's Elementary Division

The following represents a summary of a survey of parents' attitudes toward school effectiveness in the elementary schools of the Harrisburg City School District. The study was conducted during the spring of 1989 by researchers from Penn State Harrisburg's Education Program in collaboration with the Harrisburg City School District.

Methodology

Population

All students in grades K4 through 5 in the Harrisburg City School District (n=4,979) were given surveys to take home to their parents. A total of 3,328 surveys were returned representing a 67% return rate.

Survey Form

The survey used in this study was the Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness Survey developed by the Bureau of Educational Research and Service at the University of Connecticut. The instrument was designed to measure parental attitudes toward six dimensions of school effectiveness: (1) Home/School Relations, (2) Clear School Mission, (3) High Expectations, (4) Safe and Orderly Environment, (5) Instructional Leadership, and (6) Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress.

Parents were asked to rate each of the 47 items using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree). A Spanish version of the instrument was used for parents of Spanish speaking students in the district's bilingual education classes.

Major Findings

The results indicate that relatively few parents gave the Harrisburg City Schools negative "marks". In fact, of those who expressed an opinion (i.e., did not check undecided), parents gave the Harrisburg City Schools positive marks by more than a 4 to 1 margin.

More than 60% of the parents in the Harrisburg City School District gave the elementary schools positive marks (i.e., "agree") on all but one scale (Instructional Leadership). A relatively low percentage of parents gave the district negative marks--in most cases, less than 15%. The percentage of parents who are undecided on each scale ranges from 20% to 37%. This would indicate that the Harrisburg City Schools are receiving relatively few negative "marks" and that the percentage of positive "marks" would probably be enhanced by efforts to better inform the "Undecided" segment.

On the Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress Scale, approximately 70% of the parents rated the district positively; only 10% of the parents rated this scale negatively. Approximately 20% were undecided.

Approximately 65% of the parents rated the Safe and Orderly

Environment Scale positively while only 13% rated it negatively. About 22% of the parents were undecided.

On the Clear School Mission Scale, 69% of the parents rated the schools positively. Only 11% of the parents rated the schools negatively with approximately 23% undecided.

The Home/School Relations Scale was rated positively by 62% of the parents. This scale was the most problematic with 18% of the parents rating the schools negatively. The district has the greatest opportunity for improvement in this area. About 20% of the parents were undecided.

The Instructional Leadership Scale was rated positively by 52% of the parents. Only 12% of the parents rated this scale negatively. However, approximately 37% of the parents were undecided about items in this category. Clearly, with such a high percentage of parents "undecided", the percentage of positive ratings would be enhanced through better communication regarding the issues addressed by this scale.

Acknowledgments

The importance of parental attitudes relative to schooling is receiving a great deal of attention recently. The Board of Education and administration of the Harrisburg City School District are to be commended for their leadership efforts in seeking the opinions of the parents in the district. Donald Carroll, Superintendent, and Norma Gotwalt, Director of Elementary Education were instrumental in making this project a reality.

We gratefully acknowledge the efforts of the elementary classroom teachers in Harrisburg. It was through their diligence that an exceptional return rate was obtained. They are to be commended for their efforts.

Several key people at Penn State Harrisburg were instrumental in completing this study. We acknowledge the team of people that hand coded almost 5,000 surveys--Tracey Darden, William Henk, Eileen Lentz, Derrick Lentz, Robert Lesniak, Peggy Macfarlane, Heide Melnick, and Mark Melnick. We would like to acknowledge Robert J. Lesniak, Acting Division Head, Division of Behavioral Science and Education, for his support in this project. In addition, the extra efforts of Peggy Macfarlane made many aspects of this project move along smoothly.

We would like to express our appreciation to Robert K. Gable of the University of Connecticut for granting us permission to use the Parent Attitude Toward School Effectiveness instrument in this research and for his input at various stages of this project.

Finally, a very special thank you to the parents who took the time to complete and return the survey.

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Introduction

This report presents the findings of a survey of the parents' attitudes toward school effectiveness in the Harrisburg City School District's early childhood and elementary programs. The project was a collaborative effort between the Harrisburg City School District and The Pennsylvania State University at Harrisburg's Education Program. All parents with children in any of the district's eleven elementary buildings were asked to participate in the study conducted in the Spring of 1989.

This study was designed to survey parents' attitudes toward six dimensions of school effectiveness (Clear School Mission, High Expectations, Safe and Orderly Environment, Effective Leadership, Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress, and Home/School Relations). The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To determine what parents' attitudes and perceptions are with respect to the six dimensions of school effectiveness listed above in the Harrisburg City School District.
2. To provide each elementary building with custom computer output reflecting the parental responses for that building.

The following sections of this report will present a discussion of the methodology employed to conduct the study, discussion of the results, and recommendations.

Methodology

Survey Form. The survey used in this study was the Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness Survey developed by the Bureau of Educational Research and Service at the University of Connecticut. The instrument was designed to measure parental attitudes toward six dimensions of school effectiveness: (1) Home/School Relations, (2) Clear School Mission, (3) High Expectations, (4) Safe and Orderly Environment, (5) Instructional Leadership, and (6) Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress. It is important to keep in mind that the results of this survey reflect parents' perceptions of these six dimensions. There may be discrepancies between parents' perception, and the actual state of these six dimensions. In that case, the need for improved communication between the school and home is emphasized.

In Part I of the survey form (see Appendix A), parents were asked to provide some demographic information related to the number of times they visit their child's school in a year, reasons they visit their child's school, length of visits, education level, gender, family size, and number of parents living at home.

In Part II, parents were asked to rate each of the 47 items using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree). The 47 item numbers representing each scale are listed in Table 1. The underlined items on Table 1

Table 1
Parent Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness
Scales and Item Numbers

Scales	Item Numbers ¹
Home/School Relations	1 6 <u>11</u> 13 16 18 <u>23</u> 28 <u>31</u> 34 <u>38</u>
Clear School Mission	10 21 <u>25</u> 35 47
High Expectations	<u>4</u> 20 24 26 29 <u>36</u> 39 <u>44</u>
Safe and Orderly Environment	2 5 <u>9</u> 17 <u>30</u> 32 33 <u>41</u>
Instructional Leadership	7 <u>12</u> <u>19</u> 27 37 42 46
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	3 8 14 <u>15</u> 22 40 43 45

¹ Underlined items are negative item stems
and were reverse scored prior to analysis.

are reverse scored prior to analysis.

A Spanish version of the instrument was used for parents of Spanish speaking students in the district's bilingual education classes.

Distribution. Surveys (n=4,979) were hand coded by a research team from the Education Program at Penn State Harrisburg with a unique ten digit code number. The code number allowed the research team to monitor the return rate and provided information regarding the grade, building, sex, and race of the child.

The survey forms were sorted by the Penn State research team for delivery to each of the eleven elementary buildings participating in the study. Packets were prepared containing hand-coded survey forms for each child in the school sorted by classroom. Teachers distributed the survey forms to each child using a list provided. Appendix B contains a copy of the Instructions for Survey Distribution provided to the teachers.

All children were asked to take the survey form home to their parents along with a letter of explanation from the Director of Elementary Education (see Appendix C). Parents were to complete the survey form and send it back to school with their child. At the end of one week, any students who had not yet returned the survey forms were given a second coded survey form and were asked to urge their parents to complete it and return the form.

All completed survey forms were collected by the classroom teacher and forwarded to the building offices. The research team

from Penn State Harrisburg picked up the completed survey forms at each of the eleven elementary building offices.

Population. All students in grades K4 through 5 in the Harrisburg City School District (n=4,979) were given surveys to take home to their parents.

Date Preparation and Analysis. All surveys were screened for proper completion and professionally keyed for creation of the data file. Files were then reviewed and cleaned, where necessary, prior to analysis.

Descriptive data including frequencies, percents, means, and standard deviations were generated, where appropriate, for the items on the surveys.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

Returns. Students in each of the eleven buildings in grades K4 thru 5 (n=4,979) in the Harrisburg City School District were given a survey form to take home to their parents. A total of 3,328 survey forms were returned representing a 67% return rate. Table 2 contains the total enrollments and the number of returns for each of the eleven buildings. As can be seen in the last column of Table 2, the building return rates ranged from 58% to 82%.

This return rate was calculated as the ratio of the total number of surveys returned to the total number of children who received surveys. However, because all children received a survey and only one per family was returned, the total number of potential families that could return the survey is actually smaller than 4,979. Thus the actual return rate is much greater than 67%. As there are no available statistics on the number of families, the actual return rate cannot be calculated. It should be noted that for this type of survey in an urban school district, the building level return rates and the district return rate are excellent. The parents and teachers are to be commended for their efforts in returning the survey forms.

Table 2
Return Rate by Building

Building	Enrollment	Returns	Percentage ¹
Franklin	309	230	74
Downey	362	231	64
Fonse	623	418	67
Hamilton	430	250	58
Lincoln	46	319	65
Marshall	377	310	82
Melrose	564	397	70
Shimmel	475	311	65
Steele	405	270	67
Woodward	252	168	67
Camp Curtin	690	412	60
DISTRICT	4,979	3,328	67

¹ This percentage is calculated by dividing the returns by the enrollment. However, because only one survey per family was to be returned as some families have more than one child in school, the actual return rate is higher than indicated.

Race. Table 3 presents a breakdown for each elementary building of the district by race. For the total district, the sample was 67% black, 19% white, 11% Hispanic, and 3% other races.

Education Level. Table 4 describes the education levels of the parents responding to the survey. As can be seen in the bottom row of the table, 26% of the parents responding had no high school diploma, 40% completed high school, 18% had one year of technical school or college, 10% had two years of technical school or college, 4% had a 4-year college degree, and 2% have attended graduate school. It should be noted that there is wide variation at the building level in those percentages. For example, the range of percentages for parents with no high school diploma was from 7% at Ben Franklin Elementary to 40% at the Foose Early Childhood Center.

Gender. Table 5 presents the percentages of male and female respondents in each building. For this study, 90% of the parents who returned surveys were female; 10% were male. This pattern was very consistent across buildings as evidenced by the relatively small range of percentages.

Number of Parents at Home. The number of parents living at home for each building and the district is contained in Table 6. Overall, 53% of the families are single parent families and 47% of the families are two parent families. The percentage of two parent families ranges from 36% to 54% by building.

Table 3
Percentage of Race of Respondents by Building

Building	White	Black	Hispanic	Other
Franklin	11	82	5	2
Downey	20	68	12	
Fonse	9	60	25	6
Hamilton	23	63	10	4
Lincoln	21	69	9	1
Marshall	15	77	6	2
Melrose	19	56	19	6
Shimmel	42	44	13	1
Steele	12	82	5	1
Woodward	11	80	9	
Camp Curtin	18	76	4	2
DISTRICT	19	67	11	3

Table 4
Education Level of Respondents by Building

Building	Percentage					
	No High School	H.S. Diploma	1 Yr. College/ Tech.	2 Yr. College/ Tech.	4 Yr. College	Graduate School
Franklin	7	32	23	20	9	9
Downey	27	40	23	5	2	3
Foose	40	40	12	6	2	>1
Hamilton	34	37	16	11	1	1
Lincoln	21	39	23	12	3	2
Marshall	22	39	18	9	7	5
Melrose	29	41	17	9	3	1
Shinnel	29	42	14	12	3	>1
Steele	21	45	22	7	3	2
Woodward	26	40	20	7	4	3
Camp Curtin	21	44	16	12	4	3
DISTRICT	26	40	18	10	4	2

Table 5

Distribution of Respondent's Gender by Building

Building	Percentage	
	Male	Female
Franklin	8	92
Downey	6	94
Fonse	8	92
Hamilton	9	91
Lincoln	10	90
Marshall	12	88
Melrose	11	89
Shimmel	11	89
Steele	11	89
Woodward	7	93
Camp Curtin	10	90
DISTRICT	10	90

Table 6
Percentage of Parents Living at Home

Building	Percentage	
	One Parent	Two Parents
Franklin	46	54
Downey	64	36
Foose	64	36
Hamilton	56	44
Lincoln	46	54
Marshall	53	47
Melrose	49	51
Shimmel	47	53
Steele	51	49
Woodward	61	39
Camp Curtin	51	49
DISTRICT	53	47

Family size. Table 7 shows the percentage of families with one, two, three, four, and five or more children at home for each building and the district. The majority of families have two to three children districtwide. However, there is some significant variation across buildings. In comparing the building percentages with the district percentages in Table 7, it can be seen that some buildings have a greater concentration of small families (1 to 3 children) and a smaller concentration of large families (4 or more children) than the district averages would indicate.

Number of Visits to School. Table 8 presents the average number of visits to school during school and evening hours each year for each building. Parents report that they visit their child's elementary school an average of 4.1 times per year during regular school hours. They also report that they visit the school an average of 2.98 times per year during evening hours. As can be seen in the last column of Table 8, the range in the number of parent visits is fairly wide (5.00 to 9.72).

Reasons for Visits to School. Table 9 presents a breakdown of parents' reported reasons for visiting their child's school. The percentage of parents who report that they visit school is as follows: (a) to discuss my child's progress--76%, (b) to discuss discipline problems--33%, (c) to attend academic/cultural events--24%, (d) to volunteer--10%, and (e) to attend an athletic event--9%. Four percent of the parents report that they do not visit the school for any reason.

Table 7

Distribution of Number of Children at Home by Building

Building	Number of Children (%)				
	One	Two	Three	Four	Five +
Franklin	22	43	24	9	2
Downey	12	28	31	14	15
Foose	10	27	29	20	14
Hamilton	17	30	25	14	12
Lincoln	17	27	30	17	9
Marshall	15	28	29	20	8
Melrose	8	30	30	19	13
Shimmel	17	36	25	13	9
Steele	12	40	29	11	8
Woodward	16	29	27	15	13
Camp Curtin	16	35	27	13	9
DISTRICT	14	32	28	16	10

Table 8

Parents' Average Number of Visits to
School Each Year By Building

Building	Average Number of Visits		
	During School Hours	During Evening Hours	Total
Franklin	4.92	5.19	9.72
Downey	4.40	2.79	7.84
Foose	3.60	2.13	5.00
Hamilton	4.20	2.02	6.23
Lincoln	4.64	3.10	7.59
Marshall	3.95	2.57	5.57
Melrose	2.95	2.60	5.21
Shimmel	3.65	3.18	6.65
Steele	3.96	2.49	7.72
Woodward	5.40	2.67	8.08
Camp Curtin	4.45	3.03	7.26
DISTRICT	4.10	2.98	7.14

Table 9
Parents' Reasons For Visiting School By Building

Building	Percentage ¹					
	To Volunteer	Athletic Event	Academic/Cultural Event	Discuss Discipline Problem	Discuss Child's Progress	Don't Visit At All
Franklin	19	10	39	23	71	2
Downey	12	10	26	34	77	3
Foose	7	9	18	31	71	5
Hamilton	9	10	19	43	78	4
Lincoln	10	9	25	28	77	3
Marshall	11	6	30	34	69	5
Melrose	6	6	21	37	76	5
Shimmel	8	11	22	33	79	2
Steele	9	9	25	35	80	3
Woodward	11	10	15	34	72	1
Cann Curtin	9	10	19	34	82	3
DISTRICT	10	9	24	33	76	4

¹ The percentages for each building will not total 100% as the categories were not mutually exclusive. Parents could select more than one category.

Survey Findings

The Parent Attitude Toward School Effectiveness Survey (PATSE) was designed to yield scores that reflect parent attitudes on each of the six dimensions of school effectiveness described earlier. The 47 items included on the Parent Attitude Toward School Effectiveness Survey (PATSE) were grouped for analysis according to the scale they represented (see Table 1).

All items were scored in a positive direction (i.e., 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Undecided, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree) so that agreement with positive items yields high scale scores and reflects a positive attitude toward that dimension of school effectiveness. All negatively worded items included on the survey have been reverse scored prior to calculating the item and scale level means. To facilitate interpretation of this report, the negatively worded items contained on the PATSE have been changed to reflect positive items. Parents, however, actually responded to the original items on the PATSE. (see Appendix A).

The following sections present the results and interpretation of the Parent Attitude Toward School Effectiveness Survey in the Harrisburg City School District. Means and average distributions of responses for each scale will be discussed first. A discussion of the item level results and response distributions will follow.

Scale Level Analysis

Table 10 presents the rank-ordered means for each scale on the instrument. Parents in the Harrisburg City School District gave their highest ratings to the Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress scale (mean=3.77); the lowest rating was on the Instructional Leadership scale (mean=3.48). These means represent a moderate positive rating on each of the six scales. The means alone, however, may not be as good an indicator of the Harrisburg City Schools' report card from the parents as the distribution of responses on each scale. The following sections discuss the results for each scale on the survey and the accompanying figures depict the response distributions for each scale. The results indicate that relatively few parents gave the Harrisburg City Schools negative "marks". In fact, of those who expressed an opinion (i.e., did not check undecided), parents gave the Harrisburg City Schools positive marks by more than a 4 to 1 margin.

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress Scale. This scale reflects parents' perceptions as to how frequently feedback about student academic progress is obtained. It determines the extent to which parents perceive that multiple assessment methods are utilized and results of testing are used to improve individual student performance and the instructional program.

Table 10
Rank Order of Scale Means

Scale	Mean
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	3.77
Safe & Orderly Environment	3.68
Clear School Mission	3.67
High Expectations	3.61
Home/School Relations	3.58
Instructional Leadership	3.48

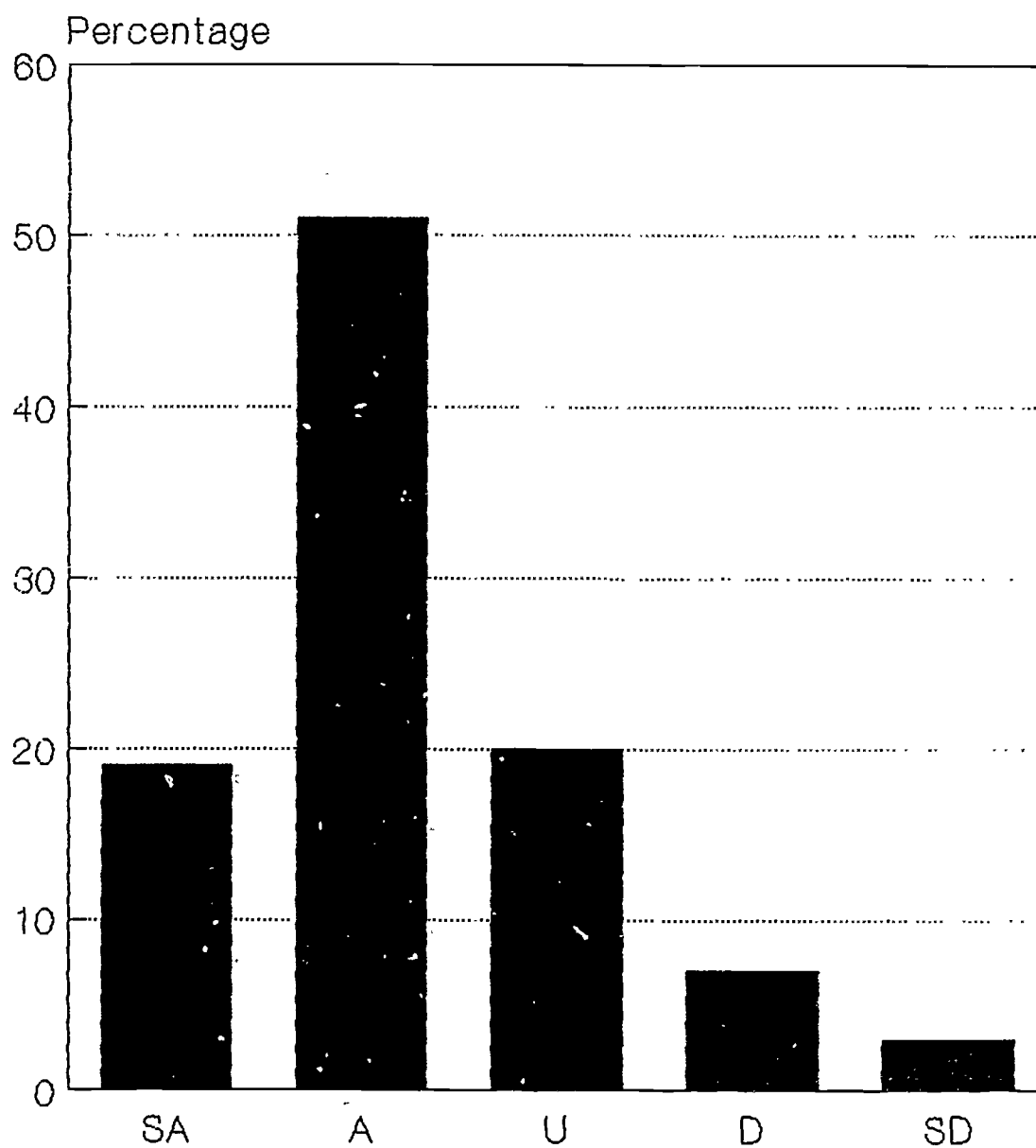
Figure 1 presents the average distribution of responses for all items on this scale. As can be seen from the figure, the percentage of positive responses (strongly agree=51%; agree=19%) is approximately 70%. Only 10% of the parents give the Harrisburg City Schools negative marks (strongly disagree=3%; disagree=7%). Approximately 20% of the parents were undecided.

Safe and Orderly Environment Scale. This scale reflects parents' perceptions regarding the degree to which their child's school has an orderly, purposeful atmosphere--yet not oppressive. This refers to an atmosphere free from threat of physical harm. It includes concerns about discipline, vandalism, student and staff morale, and pupil sense of ownership and pride.

Figure 2 presents the average distribution of responses for all items on this scale. As can be seen from the figure, the combined percentage of positive responses (strongly agree=18%; agree=47%) is approximately 65%. Only 13% of the parents give the Harrisburg City Schools negative marks (strongly disagree=4%; disagree=9%). Approximately 22% of the parents were undecided.

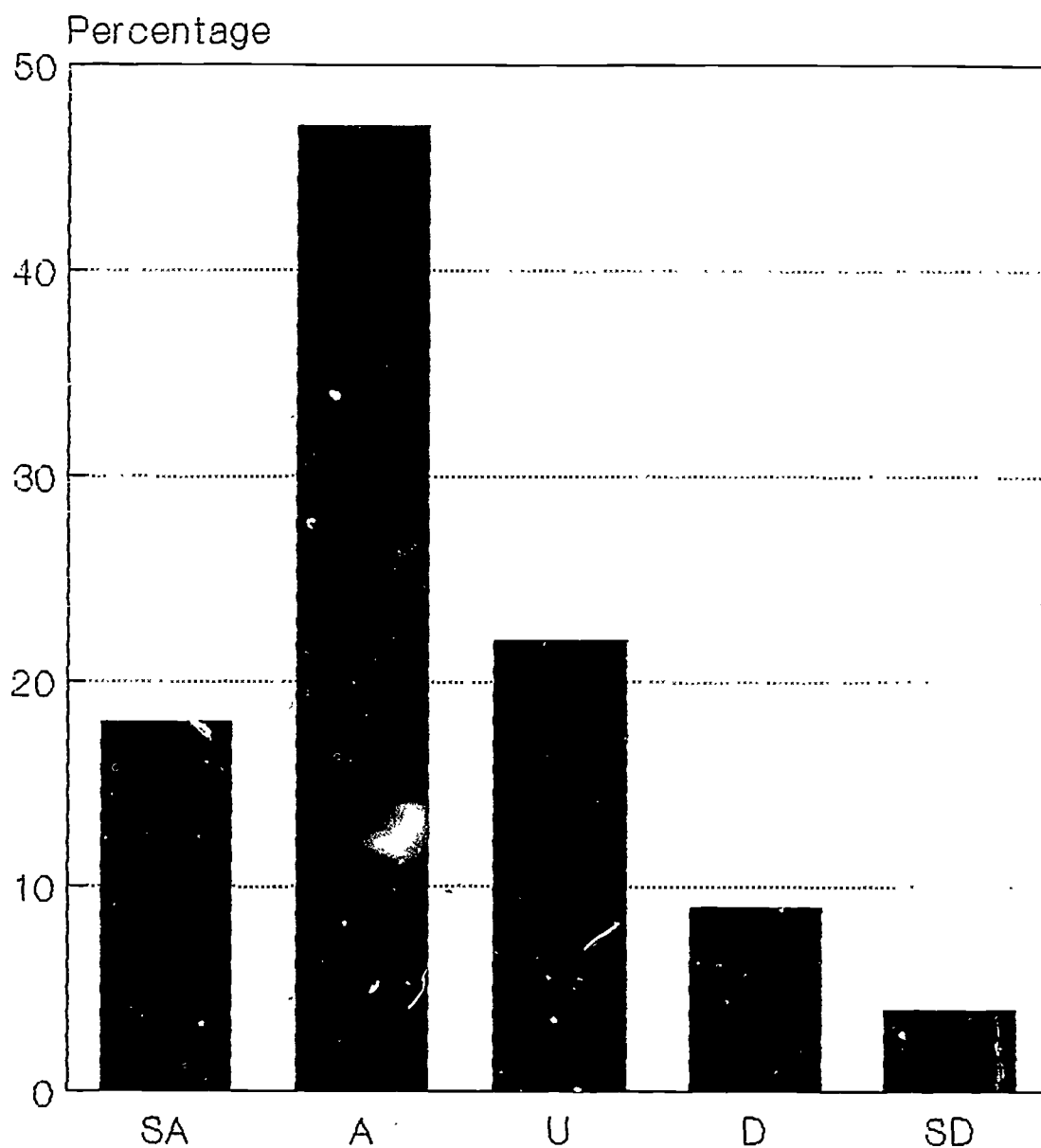
Clear School Mission Scale. This scale reflects the degree to which parents perceive that the school has a clearly articulated mission, through which the staff shares an understanding of and commitment to instructional goals and priorities. It also reflects the degree to which parents perceive that the school policies demonstrate a push for student

Figure 1
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
Average Distribution of Responses



SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree
U=Undecided
SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree

Figure 2
Safe & Orderly Environment
Average Distribution of Responses



SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree

U=Undecided

SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree

achievement.

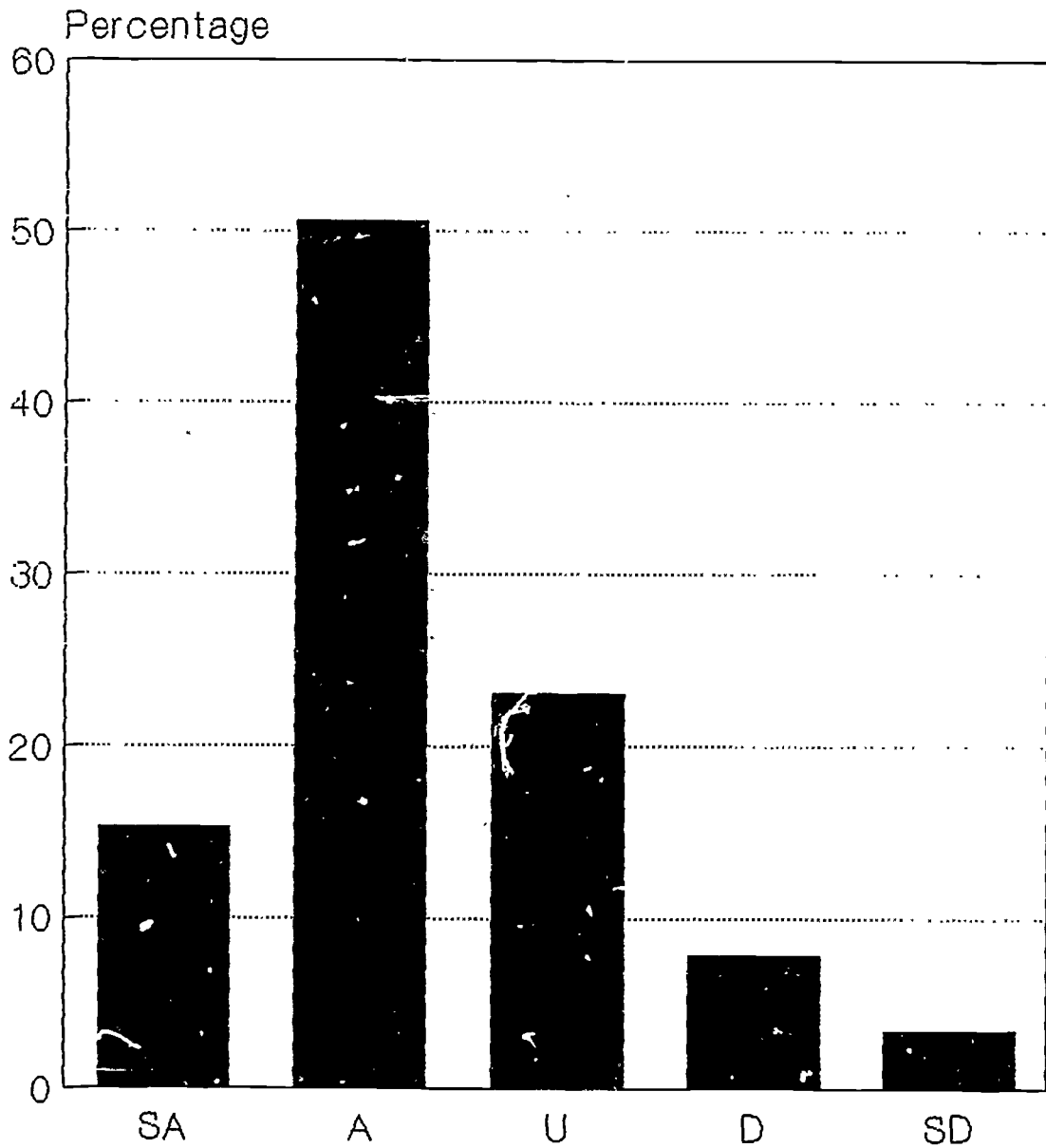
Figure 3 presents the average distribution of responses for all items on this scale. As can be seen from the figure, the combined percentage of positive responses (strongly agree=15%; agree=51%) is approximately 69%. Only 11% of the parents give the Harrisburg City Schools negative marks (strongly disagree=3%; disagree=8%). Approximately 23% of the parents were undecided.

High Expectations Scale. This scale reflects the extent to which parents perceive that the staff believes and demonstrates that students can attain mastery of basic skills and that they have the capability to help students achieve such mastery.

Figure 4 presents the distribution of responses for all items on this scale. As can be seen from the figure, the combined percentage of positive responses (strongly agree=16%; agree=45%) is approximately 61%. Only 14% of the parents give the Harrisburg City Schools negative marks (strongly disagree=4%; disagree=10%). Approximately 25% of the parents were undecided.

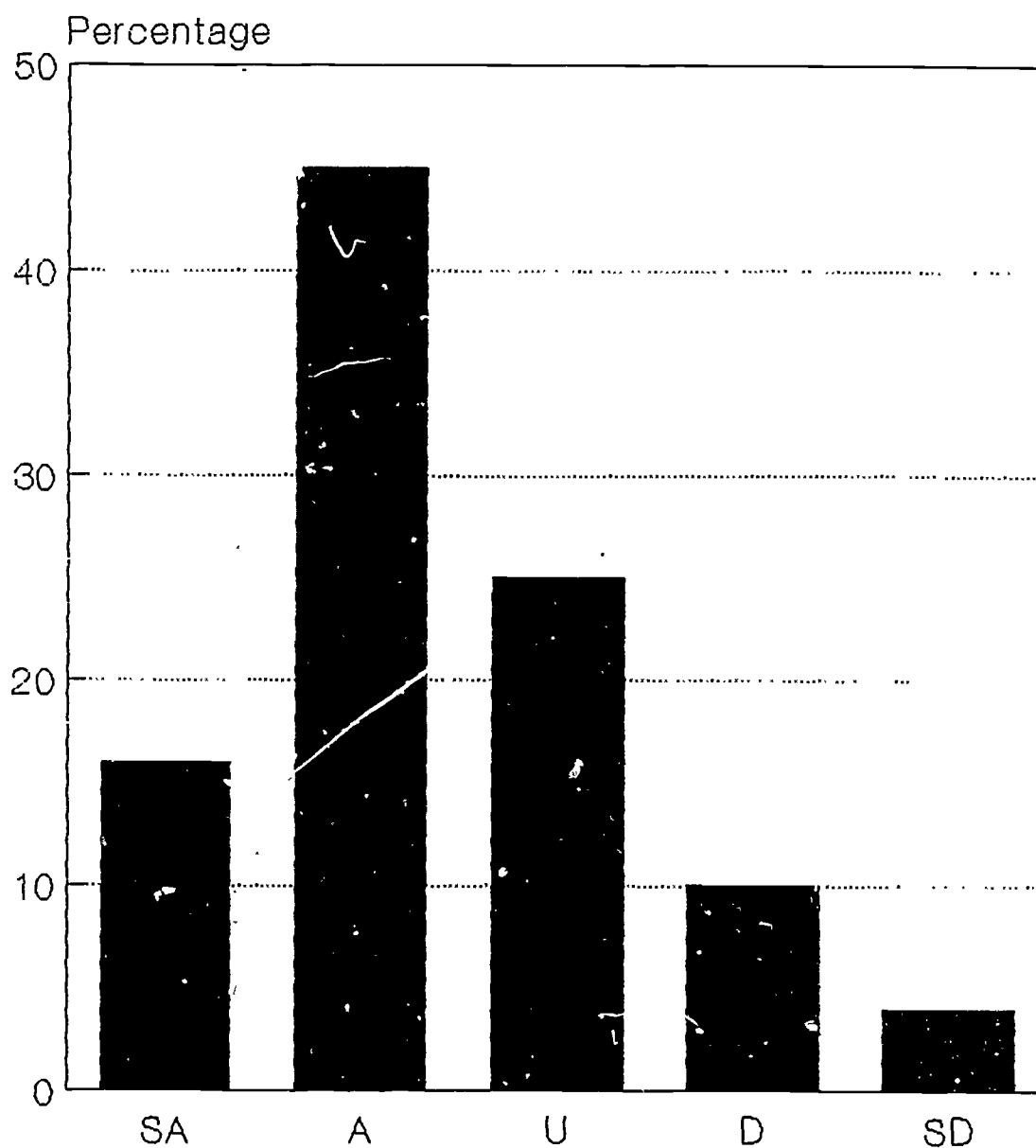
Home/School Relations Scale. This scale reflects the degree to which parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are made to feel that they have an important role in achieving this mission. It is a measure of parents perceptions of the opportunities for involvement and the communication between school and home.

Figure 3
Clear School Mission
Average Distribution of Responses



SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree
U=Undecided
SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree

Figure 4
High Expectations
Average Distribution of Responses



SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree

U=Undecided

SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree

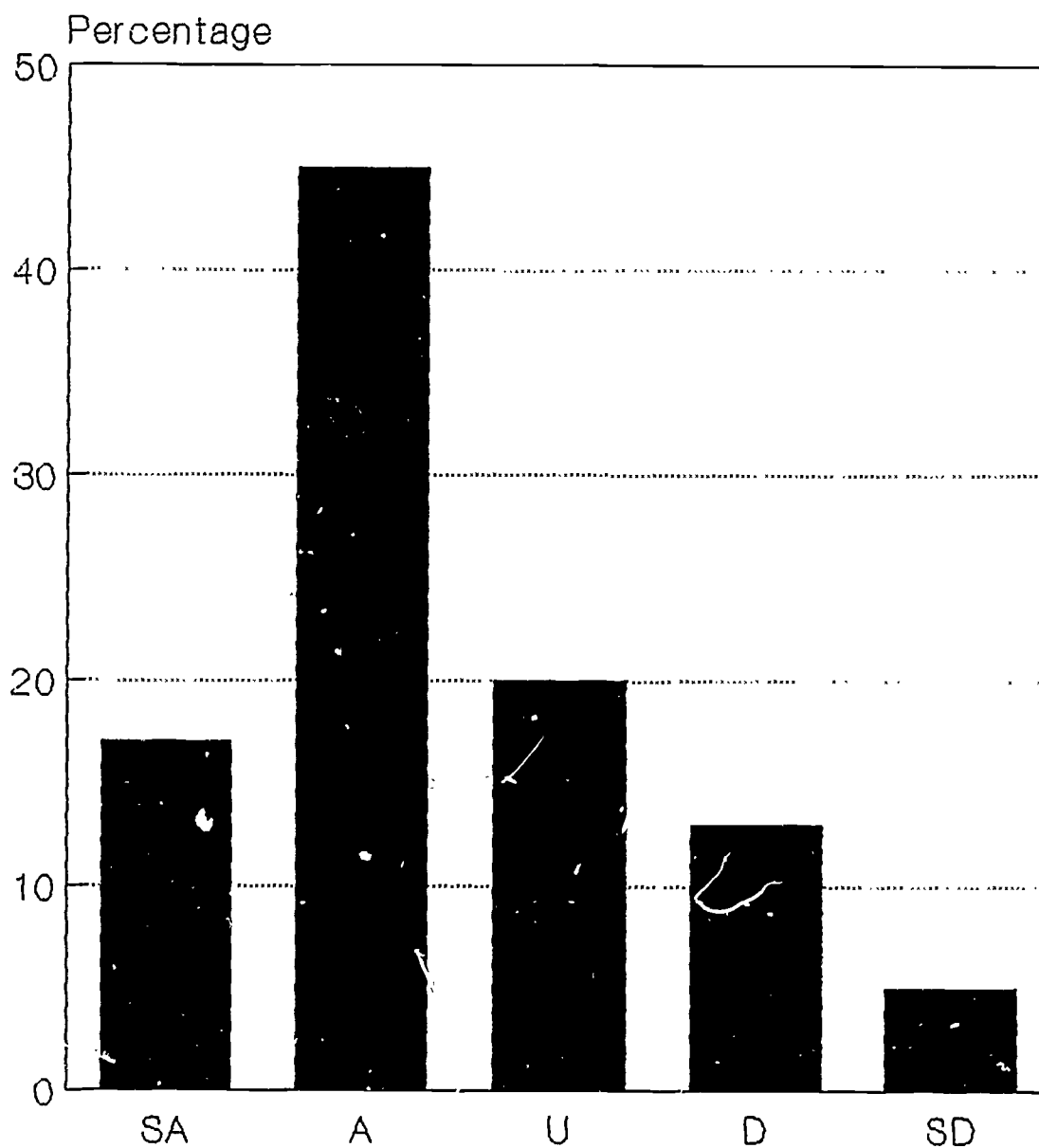
Figure 5 presents the average distribution of responses for all items on this scale. As can be seen from the figure, the combined percentage of positive responses (strongly agree=17%; agree=45%) is approximately 62%. Only 18% of the parents give the Harrisburg City Schools negative marks (strongly disagree=5%; disagree=13%). Approximately 20% of the parents were undecided.

Instructional Leadership Scale. This scale reflects the extent to which parents perceive that the principal effectively communicates the mission of the school to staff, students, and parents. It also reflects the degree to which parents perceive that the principal applies characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the educational programs.

Figure 6 presents the distribution of responses for all items on this scale. As can be seen from the figure, the combined percentage of positive responses (strongly agree=13%; agree=38%) is approximately 52%. Only 12% of the parents give the Harrisburg City Schools negative marks (strongly disagree=4%; disagree=8%). Approximately 37% of the parents were undecided.

Summary. Figure 7 represents the average distribution for each of the six scales. The percentages of "strongly agrees" and "agrees" were combined to represent one category on the figure (Agree). This category represents the degree of positive "marks" given by the parents on each of the six scales. The percentages of "strongly disagrees" and "disagrees" were combined to represent

Figure 5
Home/School Relations
Average Distribution of Responses

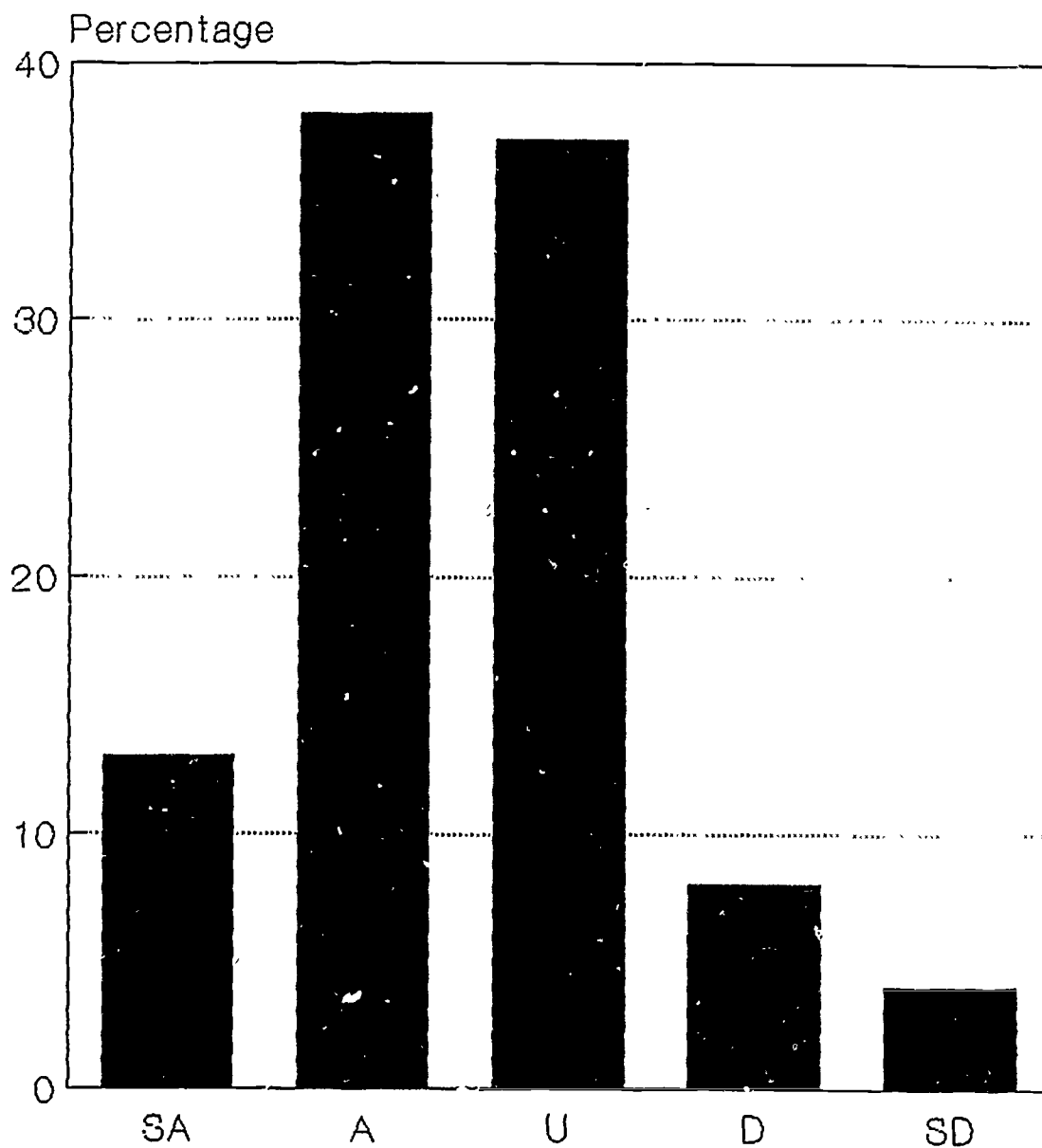


SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree

U=Undecided

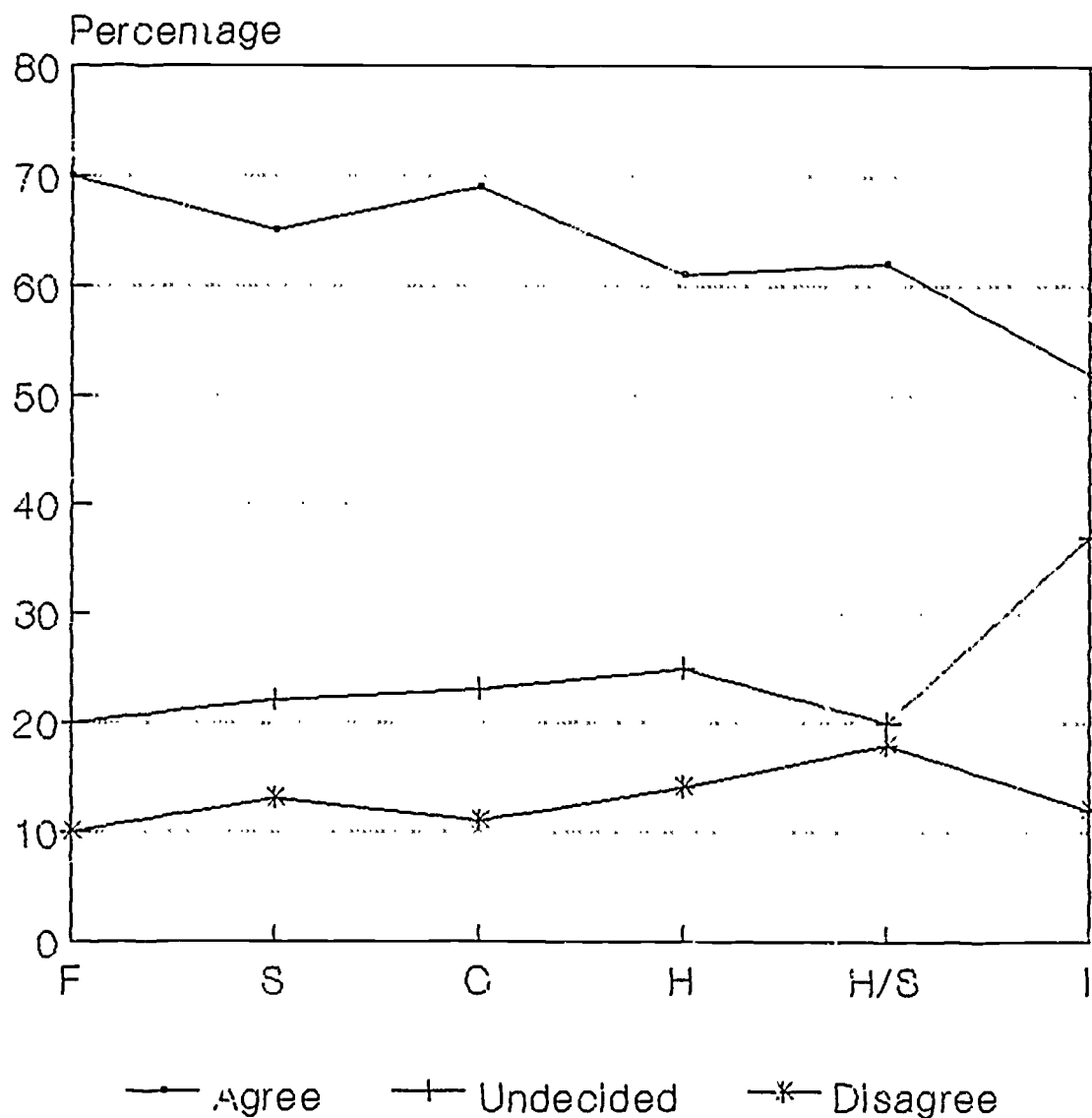
SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree

Figure 6
Instructional Leadership
Average Distribution of Responses



SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree
U=Un/decided
SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree

Figure 7
Average Percentage of Responses
for Each Scale



F=Frequent Monitoring, S=Safe & Orderly
 C=Clear School Mission, H=High Expect.
 H/S=Home School, I=Instructional Lead.

one category on the figure (Disagree). This category represents the degree of negative "marks" given by the parents on each of the six scales. The percentage of parents who were "undecided" is also depicted on Figure 7.

As can be seen on Figure 7, over 60% of the parents in the Harrisburg City School District give the elementary schools positive marks (i.e., "agree") on all but one scale (Instructional Leadership). In looking at the bottom line on the graph, a relatively low percentage of parents give the district negative marks--in most cases, less than 15%. This line is relatively parallel to the baseline with the exception of the scale of Home/School Relations. That scale peaks slightly above the rest at approximately 18%. The percentage of parents who are undecided on each scale ranges from 20% to 37%.

Note that as the average percentage of "Agree" declines the average percentage of "Disagree" remains relatively stable but the percentage of "Undecided" generally increases. This would indicate that the Harrisburg City Schools are receiving relatively few negative "marks" and that the percentage of positive "marks" would probably be enhanced by efforts to better inform the "Undecided" segment.

Item Level Analysis.

The following sections discuss the item level results of this survey. For ease of interpretation, the figures combine the strongly disagree percentage with the disagree percentage into one

"disagree" percentage for each item; the strongly agree and agree percentages were collapsed into one "agree" percentage for each item. In addition, the undecided percentage is also displayed. **Items that "dip" in the agree category and items that "peak" in the disagree and undecided categories should be targeted as possible specific areas for improvement within the Harrisburg City Schools.**

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress Scale. Table 11 presents the response percentages for the five response options for each item comprising the scale. The scale mean (3.77) is displayed at the bottom of the second column of the table. The frequency of response data provided in the right hand columns of Table 11 show which items parents tended to agree and disagree with most.

Figure 8 displays the distribution of responses for the combined categories for each item on this scale. Items 15 and 43 dip below 60% agreement on Figure 8 while the percentage of those that disagree with items 15 is slightly higher than the rest of the items on the scale. The percentage of undecided is relatively high on items 15, 22, 43.

Safe and Orderly Environment Scale. Table 12 presents the response percentages for the five response options for each item comprising the scale. The scale mean (3.68) is displayed at the bottom of the table. The frequency of response data provided in

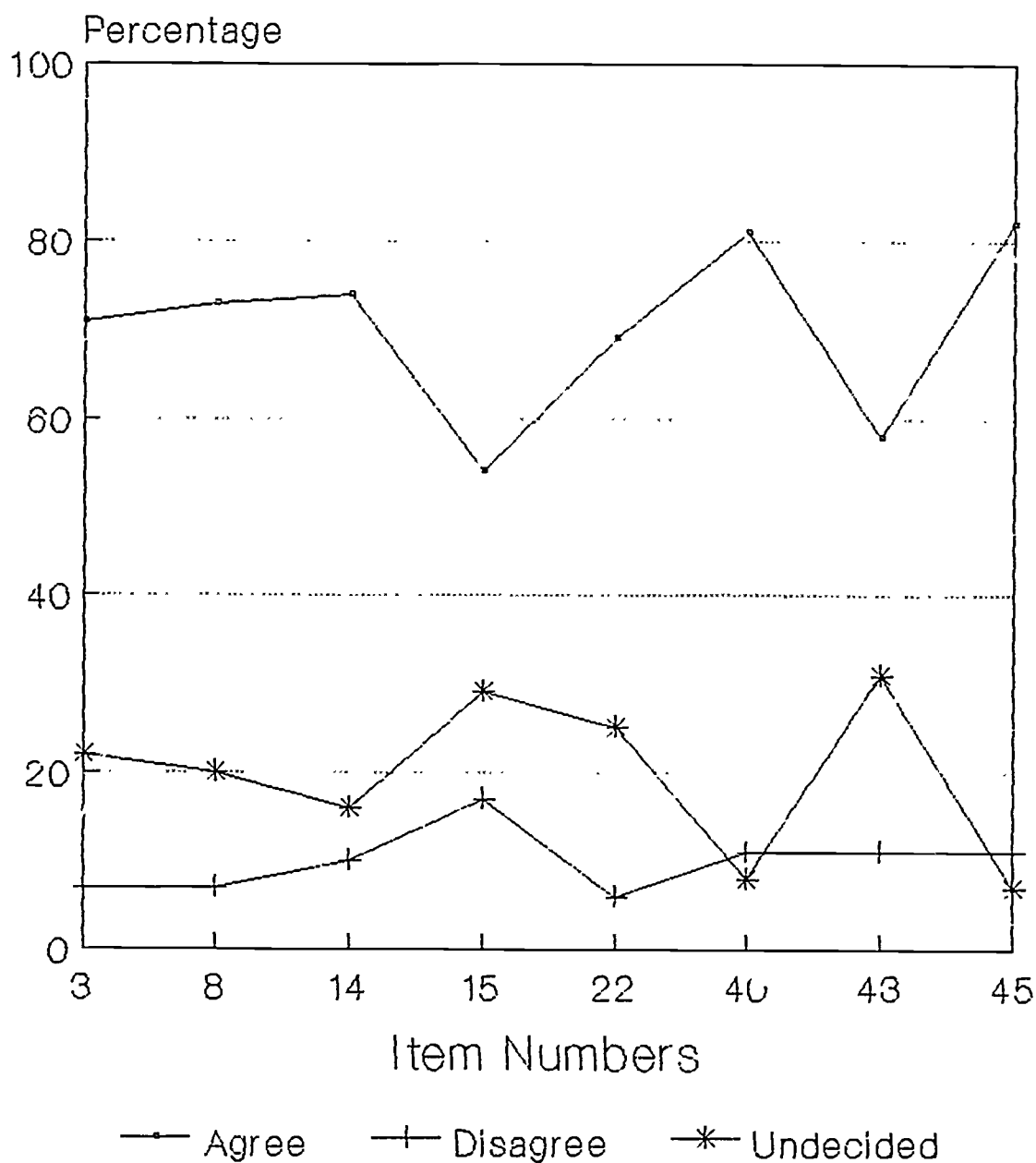
Table 11
Scale Means and Item Response Rates for
Each Scale

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	Mean	Percentage of Responses				
		SD	D	U	A	SA
3. This school uses student achievement tests to keep track of students' progress.	3.77	3	4	22	55	16
8. Teachers use many different methods (including samples of students' work and tests) to assess student progress.	3.79	3	4	20	57	16
14. Teachers in this school are quick to identify problems which students are having in reading, writing or math.	3.84	4	6	16	51	23
(R) 15. There is a system for assessing student learning on a regular basis in my child's (children's) courses.	3.50	4	13	29	38	16
22. Students are given standardized tests on a regular basis.	3.73	2	4	25	58	11
40. Homework is assigned on a regular basis by my child's (children's) teachers.	3.97	4	7	8	51	30
43. Feedback on assignments is given to students regularly.	3.54	3	8	31	48	10
45. Teachers send classwork home for me to look at on a regular basis.	3.97	3	8	7	52	30
Scale Mean		3.77				

Note: The symbol (R) in front of an item indicates the item was reverse scored prior to analysis. The wording of the item has been changed to reflect a positive item.

SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, U=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Figure 8
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
Combined Categories



the right hand columns of Table 12 shows which items parents tended to agree and disagree with most.

Figure 9 displays the distribution of responses for the combined categories for each item on this scale. Item 33 dips far below 60% agreement on Figure 9 while the percentage of those that disagree and are undecided about item 33 is slightly higher than the rest of the items on the scale.

Clear School Mission Scale. Table 13 presents the response percentages for the five response options for each item comprising the scale. The scale mean (3.67) is displayed at the bottom of the second column of the table. The frequency of response data provided in the right hand columns of Table 13 shows which items parents tended to agree and disagree with most.

Figure 10 displays the distribution of responses for the combined categories for each item on this scale. Item 25 dips substantially below 60% agreement on Figure 10 while the percentage of those that disagree with item 25 is slightly higher than the rest of the items on the scale. More importantly, the percentage of parents who are undecided about this item is approximately 40%.

High Expectations Scale. Table 14 presents the response percentages for the five response options for each item comprising the scale. The scale mean (3.61) is displayed at the bottom of the second column of the table. The frequency of response data provided in the right hand columns of Table 14 show which items

Table 12
Scale Means and Item Response Rates for
Each Scale

Safe and Orderly Environment	Mean	Percentage of Responses				
		SD	D	U	A	SA
2. Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place.	3.65	4	7	24	51	14
5. The atmosphere in this school is business-like and professional.	3.53	4	10	25	49	12
(R) 9. The school building is generally pleasant, tidy, and comfortable.	4.01	3	8	10	42	37
17. There are written statements describing codes of conduct for students in this school.	3.71	3	6	23	53	15
(R) 30. Students and teachers are proud of their school, and they help to keep it attractive.	3.99	2	8	16	40	35
32. The atmosphere in this school is student-oriented.	3.58	3	8	28	51	10
33. Generally, discipline is <u>not</u> a problem in this school.	3.25	7	14	33	39	7
(R) 41. Rules in this school are clear or consistent.	3.69	3	10	20	49	18
Scale Mean		3.68				

Note: The symbol (R) in front of an item indicates the item was reverse scored prior to analysis. The wording of the item has been changed to reflect a positive item.

SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, U=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Figure 9
Safe and Orderly Environment
Combined Categories

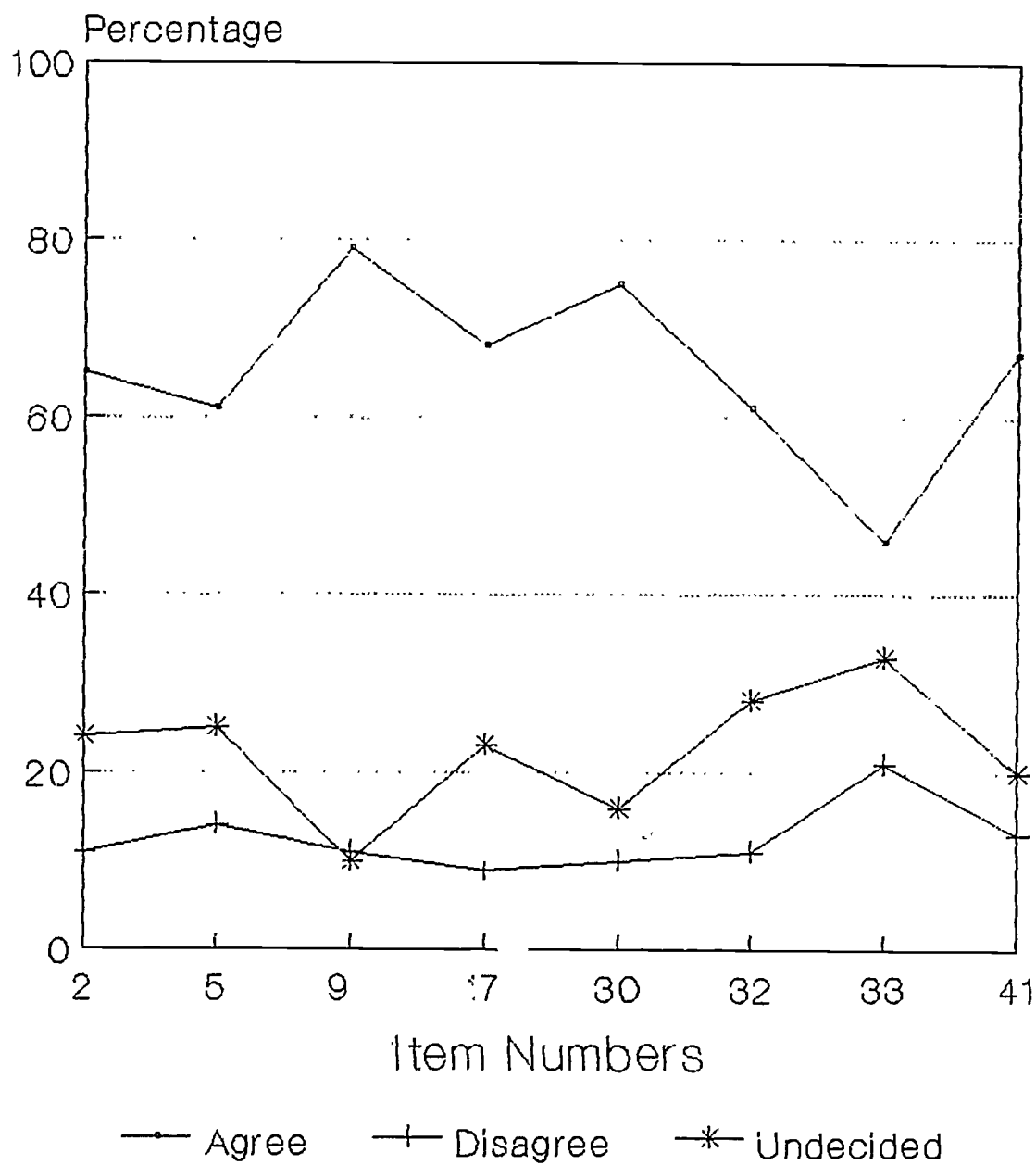


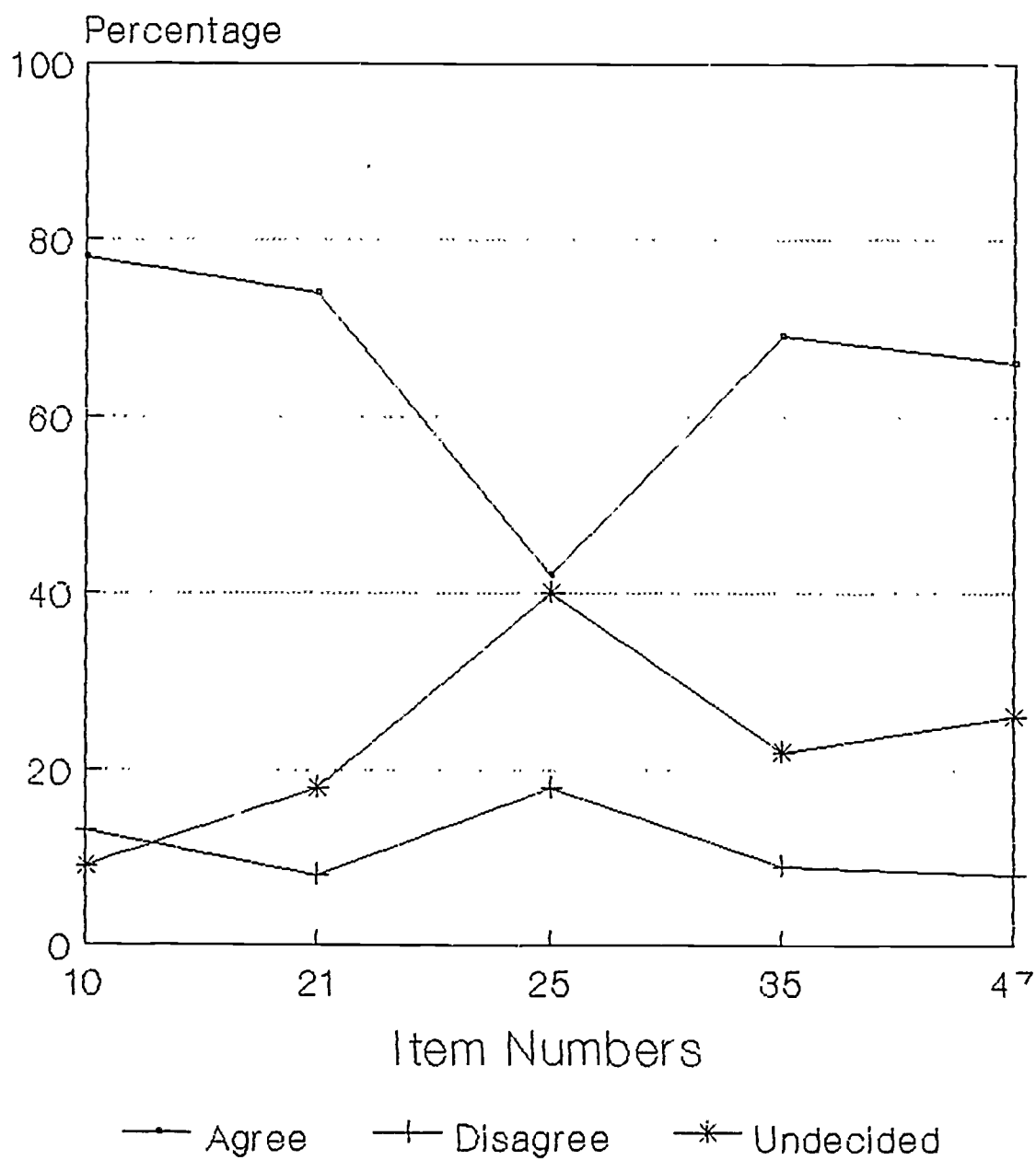
Table 13
Scale Means and Item Response Rates for
Each Scale

Clear School Mission	Mean	Percentage of Responses				
		SD	D	U	A	SA
10. Instructional materials (such as paper, textbooks, etc.) are provided to students when needed.	3.80	5	8	9	59	19
21. The general goals of this school are very clear.	3.80	3	5	18	57	17
(R) 25. Important decisions made in this school reflect the general goals of the school.	3.33	3	15	40	31	11
35. Teachers in this school feel responsible for student achievement.	3.73	3	6	22	53	16
47. School facilities are appropriate for the types of programs provided.	3.67	3	5	26	53	13
Scale Mean		3.67				

Note: The symbol (R) in front of an item indicates the item was reverse scored prior to analysis. The wording of the item has been changed to reflect a positive item.

SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, U=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Figure 10
Clear School Mission
Combined Categories



parents tended to agree and disagree with most.

Figure 11 displays the distribution of responses the collapsed categories for each item on this scale. Items 4, 29, 36, and 39 dip below 60% agreement on Figure 11 while the percentages of those that disagree or are undecided about these items are slightly higher than the rest of the items on the scale.

Home/School Relations Scale. Table 15 presents the response percentages for the five response options for each item comprising the scale. The scale mean (3.58) is displayed at the bottom of the second column of the table. The frequency of response data provided in the right hand columns of Table 15 show which items parents tended to agree and disagree with most.

Figure 12 displays the distribution of responses for the combined categories for each item on this scale. Items 11, 16, 23, 31, and 38 dip below 60% agreement on Figure 12 while the percentage of those that disagree or are undecided about those items is slightly higher than the rest of the items on the scale. This scale is the most problematic as there are several items with relatively high degrees of "disagree". There is a great deal of opportunity for improvement in this area.

Instructional Leadership Scale. Table 16 presents the response percentages for the five response options for each item comprising the scale. The scale mean (3.48) is displayed at the bottom of the second column of the table. The frequency of response data provided in the right hand columns of Table 16 show

Table 14
Scale Means and Item Response Rates for
Each Scale

High Expectations	Mean	Percentage of Responses				
		SD	D	U	A	SA
(R) 4. Most teachers in this school hold students to high standards of performance in their school work.	3.37	5	18	29	32	16
20. All students are praised for their accomplishments, not just those who accomplish the most.	3.78	3	6	22	48	21
24. Teachers try to help all students achieve.	3.95	3	4	14	55	24
26. Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	3.63	3	10	21	54	12
29. Most of the students in this school can be expected to complete high school.	3.53	4	8	35	38	15
(R) 36. Students do well in this school by having to work hard.	3.52	4	05	24	41	16
39. Students in this school are challenged to their capacity.	3.51	3	9	30	48	10
(R) 44. Teachers in this school hold consistently high expectations for my child (children).	3.58	4	12	23	42	18
Scale Mean		3.61				

Note: The symbol (R) in front of an item indicates the item was reverse scored prior to analysis. The wording of the item has been changed to reflect a positive item.

SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, U=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Figure 11
High Expectations
Combined Categories

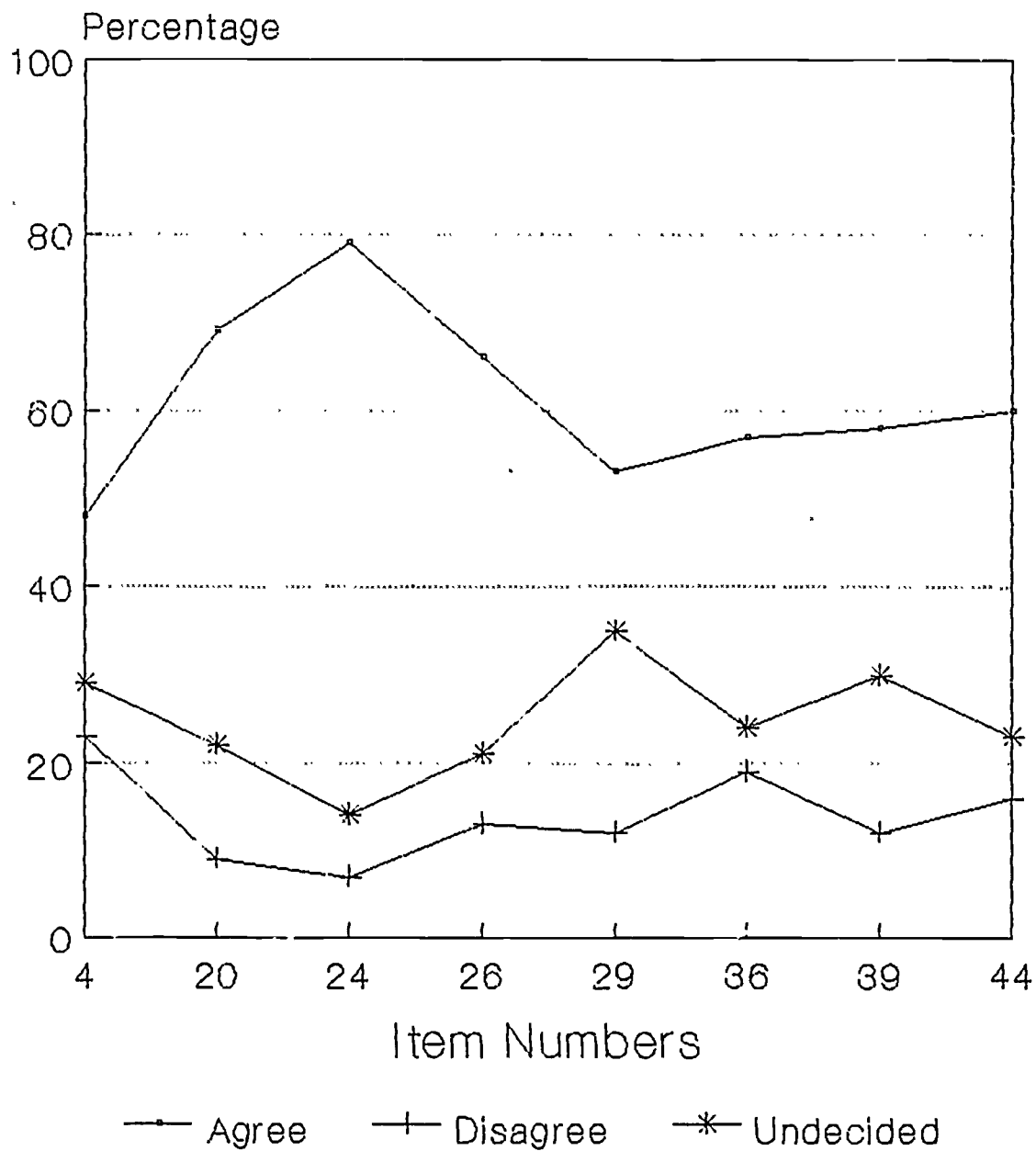
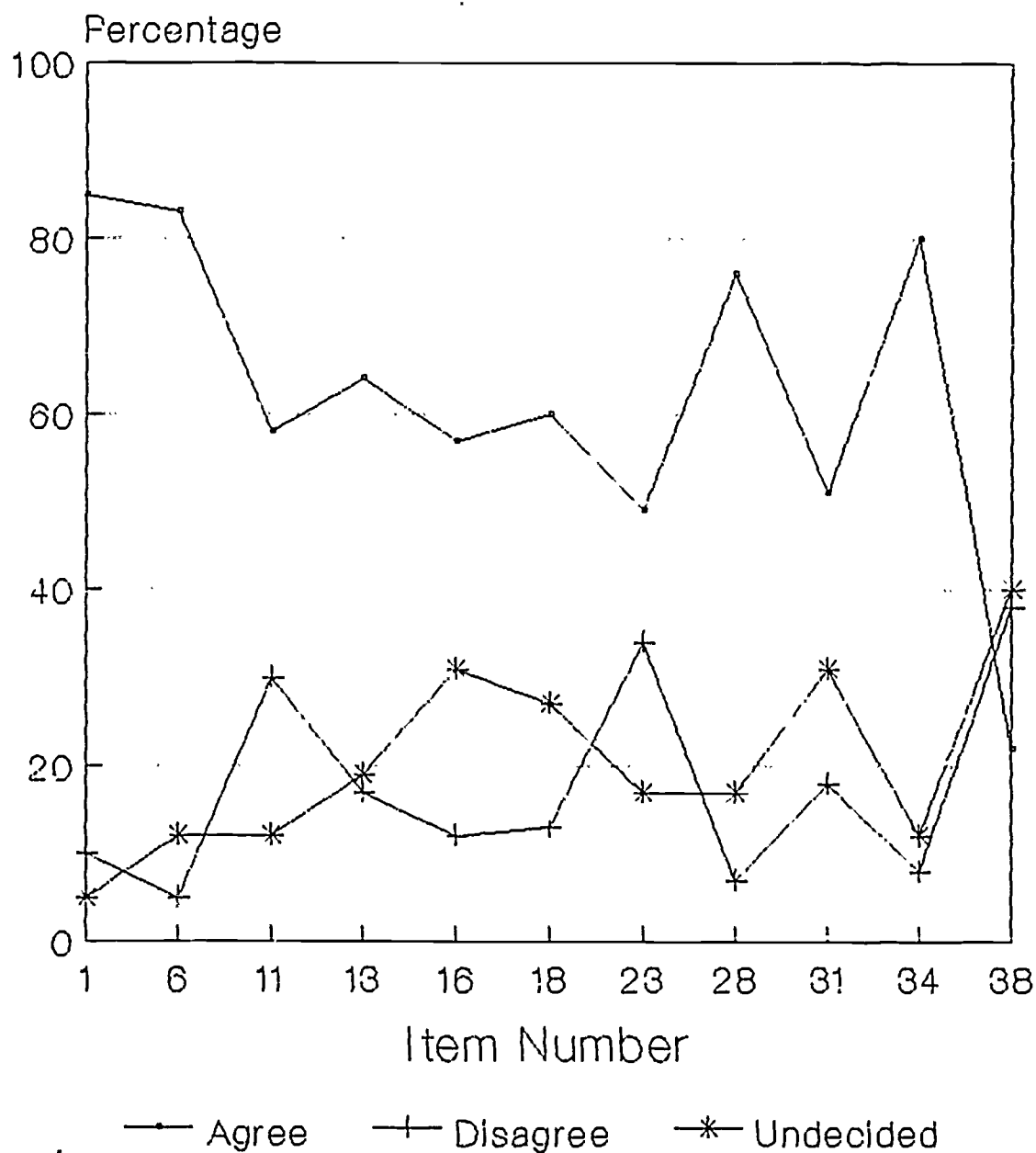


Table 15
Scale Means and Item Response Rates for
Each Scale by Building

Home/School Relations	Mean	Percentage of Responses				
		SD	D	U	A	SA
1. Teachers in this school use either phone calls, newsletters, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate my child's progress to me.	4.05	5	5	5	53	32
A. The school is open to parents' suggestions and involvement.	4.00	2	3	12	58	25
(R) 11. Teachers contact parents regularly to discuss student progress.	3.41	7	23	12	37	21
13. Most of the teachers communicate regularly with parents.	3.57	5	12	19	50	14
16. There is an active parent/school group in which many parents are involved.	3.51	3	9	31	46	11
18. Teachers seek ideas and suggestions from parents.	3.56	4	9	27	48	12
(R) 23. I know a lot about the policies, academic programs, and activities of the school.	3.21	6	28	17	37	12
28. In general, the staff is frank and open with parents and students.	3.80	3	4	17	60	16
(R) 31. It is easy for parents to contribute to important decisions made at this school.	3.43	4	14	31	38	13
34. It is easy to make appointments to meet with teachers.	3.90	3	5	12	59	21
(R) 38. Many parents visit the school.	2.80	10	28	40	16	6
Scale Mean		3.58				

Note: The symbol (R) in front of an item indicates the item was reverse scored prior to analysis. The wording of the item has been changed to reflect a positive item.

Figure 12
Home/School Relations
Combined Categories



which items parents tended to agree and disagree with most.

Figure 13 displays the distribution of responses for the combined categories for each item on this scale. Items 27 and 37 dip below 50% agreement on Figure 13 while the percentage of those that disagree with is actually low. The percentage of those that are undecided about those items, however, "peak" substantially above the rest of the items on this scale.

While this scale had the lowest overall mean, the percentage of parent giving the elementary school low "marks" in this area is actually quite small. None of the 7 items on this scale have a disagree score above 20%. The reason that the scale obtained the lowest mean is due to the high percentage of parents who are undecided. As can be seen in Figure 13, there is a very large percentage of parents who are undecided on all items on this scale (32% to 46%).

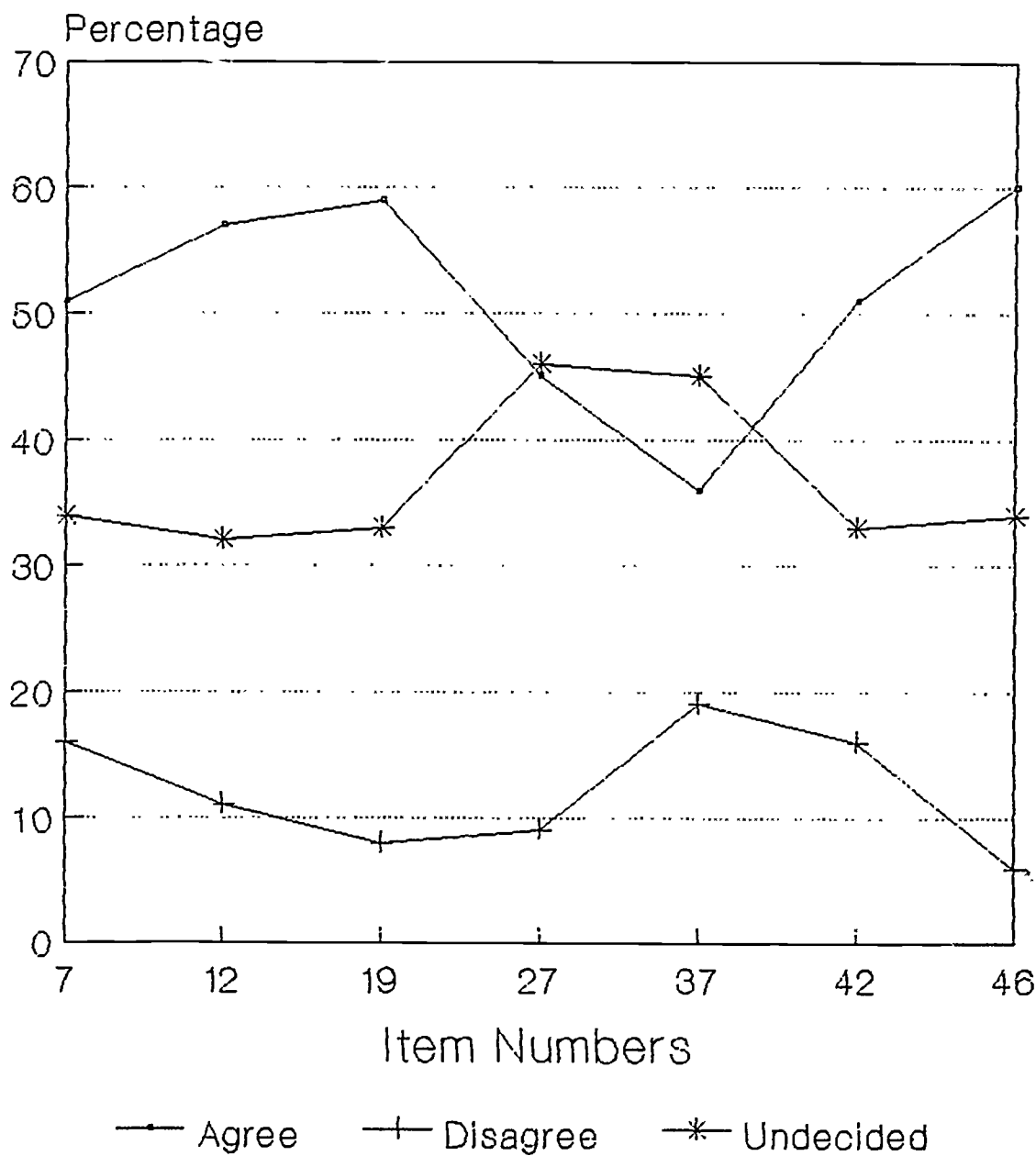
Table 16
Scale Means and Item Response Rates for
Each Scale

Instructional Leadership		Mean	Percentage of Responses				
			SD	D	U	A	SA
7.	The principal leads frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with parents and students.	3.43	5	11	34	39	12
(R) 12.	It is easy to make appointments with the principal to discuss instructional issues.	3.59	3	8	32	39	18
(R) 19.	The principal is available to discuss matters concerning instruction.	3.67	2	6	33	41	18
27.	There is strong leadership about instructional issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc.) from the principal in this school.	3.42	3	6	46	36	9
37.	The principal regularly brings instructional issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc.) to parents for discussion.	3.18	5	14	45	29	7
42.	The principal communicates the mission of the school to parents.	3.38	5	11	33	43	8
46.	The principal is often seen at school activities.	3.70	3	3	34	41	19
Scale Mean		3.48					

Note: The symbol (R) in front of an item indicates the item was reverse scored prior to analysis. The wording of the item has been changed to reflect a positive item.

SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, U=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Figure 13
Instructional Leadership
Combined Categories



Recommendations

The parents of elementary students in the Harrisburg City School District have given the schools very positive "marks". Of those parents who expressed an opinion (i.e., agreed or disagreed), the parents viewed the job the schools are doing favorably by more than a 4 to 1 margin. As evidenced by this report, the Harrisburg City Schools have strengths in many areas. This study has also identified a few areas where there is an opportunity for improvement. The following are some recommendations for the district in utilizing this information.

1. Particular attention should be given to the content of the items on the Home/School relations scale. Several of the items had relatively high degrees of "disagree". For example, while parents report that teachers use notes, phone calls, etc. to contact parents they also report that the frequency of that contact could be greater. Where the percentage of parents that disagree is high and the percentage of parents that agree is low is an opportunity for improvement.
2. The results on the Instructional Leadership scale indicate that there were a relatively large number of parents that were "undecided". The district should evaluate the content of the items on the scale and determine what actions could be taken to increase parent awareness on this scale.
3. The Pennsylvania State University at Harrisburg will provide each building with custom computer printouts representing the responses of parents for that building on each item of the survey. As each building's needs may vary somewhat, it is recommended that each building form School Development Committee's to study their building specific data. These data can be an important source of information in developing staff development activities.

4. The School Development Committees should develop specific Action Plans that lists the (a) goals/objectives to be achieve, (b) the activities required to achieve the goals/objectives, (c) the person(s) responsible for monitoring completion, (d) the timeline for completion of the activities, and (e) the type of evidence that will indicate that the goal/objectives have been met.
5. Systematic evaluation of these efforts is essential to ensure that all goals/objectives have been achieved and to determine the impact of those efforts on the educational program in the Harrisburg City School District.
6. The district should conduct a longitudinal study of parental attitudes to determine the long range impact of the staff development efforts developed by the School Development Committees.

PARENT ATTITUDES TOWARD SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to learn more about the school your child (children) currently attend(s). Your experiences and attitudes are, therefore, very important. Please assist us by responding to the following statements according to the directions provided. There are no right or wrong answers. In order to ensure confidentiality, please do not write your name on the questionnaire.

Part I

INSTRUCTIONS: PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING A NUMBER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

1. Approximately how many times do you visit your child's (children's) school in a year? _____
2. Approximately how many of these visits took place during school hours? _____
3. Approximately how many of these visits took place after school and/or evening hours? _____

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY PLACING AN X IN THE SPACE PROVIDED. PLEASE SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY.

4. What is the reason you would most likely visit your child's (children's) school?
 - a. _____ to volunteer
 - b. _____ to watch an athletic event
 - c. _____ to observe an academic or cultural event
 - d. _____ to discuss a discipline problem
 - e. _____ to discuss my child's progress
 - f. _____ I don't visit the school for any reason
 - g. _____ Other reasons (explain briefly)
5. When you visit your child's (children's) school for any reason, approximately how long is your visit?

a. _____ less than 1 hour	c. _____ 3-5 hours
b. _____ 1-3 hours	d. _____ more than 5 hours
6. What is your level of education?

a. _____ did not complete high school	d. _____ completed 2 years of college or technical training
b. _____ completed high school	e. _____ completed 4 years of college
c. _____ completed 1 year of college or technical training	f. _____ beyond 4 years of college
7. What is your sex?

a. _____ male	b. _____ female
---------------	-----------------
8. How many children are living at home?

a. _____ one	c. _____ three	e. _____ more than four
b. _____ two	d. _____ four	
9. How many parents are living at home?

a. _____ one	b. _____ two
--------------	--------------

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read each of the following statements carefully and indicate the extent to which you either agree or disagree with each one by circling the appropriate letters. The response categories are:

SA = Strongly agree

A = Agree

U = Undecided (you neither agree nor disagree)

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

For example, consider the following statement:

The school building is not clean.

(SD) D U A SA

By circling SD, you have indicated that you strongly disagree with this statement. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. Thank you for your help and please remember to respond to all statements.

#####

- | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| 1. Teachers in this school use either phone calls, newsletters, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate my child's progress to me. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 2. Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 3. This school uses student achievement tests to keep track of students' progress. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 4. Most teachers in this school do <u>not</u> hold students to high standards of performance in their school work. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 5. The atmosphere in this school is business-like and professional. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 6. The school is open to parents' suggestions and involvement. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 7. The principal leads frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with parents and students. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 8. Teachers use many different methods (including samples of students' work and tests) to assess student progress. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 9. The school building is generally <u>unpleasant</u> , <u>unkempt</u> , and <u>uncomfortable</u> . | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 10. Instructional materials (such as paper, textbooks, etc.) are provided to students when needed. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 11. Teachers do <u>not</u> contact parents regularly to discuss student progress. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 12. It is difficult to make appointments with the principal to discuss instructional issues. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 13. Most of the teachers communicate regularly with parents. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 14. Teachers in this school are quick to identify problems which students are having in reading, writing or math. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 15. There is <u>no</u> system for assessing student learning on a regular basis in my child's (children's) courses. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 16. There is an active parent/school group in which many parents are involved. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 17. There are written statements describing codes of conduct for students in this school. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 18. Teachers seek ideas and suggestions from parents. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| 19. The principal is <u>not</u> available to discuss matters concerning instruction. | SD | D | U | A | SA |
| All students are praised for their accomplishments, not just those who accomplish the most. | SD | D | U | A | SA |

21. The general goals of this school are very clear.	SD	D	U	A	SA
22. Students are given standardized tests on a regular basis.	SD	D	U	A	SA
23. I know very little about the policies, academic programs, and activities of the school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
24. Teachers try to help all students achieve.	SD	D	U	A	SA
25. Important decisions made in this school do <u>not</u> reflect the general goals of the school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
26. Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	SD	D	U	A	SA
27. There is strong leadership about instructional issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc.) from the principal in this school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
28. In general, the staff is frank and open with parents and students.	SD	D	U	A	SA
29. Most of the students in this school can be expected to complete high school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
30. Students and teachers are <u>not</u> proud of their school, <u>nor</u> do they help to keep it attractive.	SD	D	U	A	SA
31. It is difficult for parents to contribute to important decisions made at this school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
32. The atmosphere in this school is student-oriented.	SD	D	U	A	SA
33. Generally, discipline is <u>not</u> a problem in this school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
34. It is easy to make appointments to meet with teachers.	SD	D	U	A	SA
35. Teachers in this school feel responsible for student achievement.	SD	D	U	A	SA
36. Students do well in this school without having to work hard.	SD	D	U	A	SA
37. The principal regularly brings instructional issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc.) to parents for discussion.	SD	D	U	A	SA
38. Very few parents visit the school.	SD	D	U	A	SA
39. Students in this school are challenged to their capacity.	SD	D	U	A	SA
40. Homework is assigned on a regular basis by my child's (children's) teachers.	SD	D	U	A	SA
41. Rules in this school are <u>not</u> clear or consistent.	SD	D	U	A	SA
42. The principal communicates the mission of the school to parents.	SD	D	U	A	SA
43. Feedback on assignments is given to students regularly.	SD	D	U	A	SA
44. Teachers in this school do <u>not</u> hold consistently high expectations for my child (children).	SD	D	U	A	SA
45. Teachers send classwork home for me to look at on a regular basis.	SD	D	U	A	SA
46. The principal is often seen at school activities.	SD	D	U	A	SA
47. School facilities are appropriate for the types of programs provided.	SD	D	U	A	SA

THANK YOU FOR RETURNING ME

Developed by The University of Connecticut,
Bureau of Educational Research and Service



HARRISBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT

1201 NORTH SIXTH STREET
P.O. BOX 2645 — MAILING ADDRESS
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17105

January 27, 1989

Dear Parent:

Today your child is bringing home a survey for you to answer. We realize this is a rather long survey, but it is our hope you will take time to answer all the questions and return the form with your child as soon as possible.

Your answers will help us to know how you believe our schools are fulfilling their responsibility of providing an education for your child. Your input is important as we continue to improve our instructional programs.

Be assured you will not be identified by name when you return the survey. Your answers will in no way affect your child's grades. The results of the survey will be used ONLY for the purpose of planning.

On behalf of your principal and teacher I want to thank you for taking time to help us perform our responsibilities in a more effective manner.

Sincerely,

Norma Gotwalt, Director
Division of Elementary Education

NG/vlj

PENNSTATE



Harrisburg

The Capital College

(717) 948-6000

U.S. Route 230
Middletown, PA 17057INSTRUCTIONS FOR SURVEY DISTRIBUTION

Enclosed in your room packets are (1) a class list with a hand numbered student ID in the left margin and (2) number-coded surveys for each child on the class list. Please distribute the surveys as follows:

1. Matching the student number hand-written in the left hand margin of your class list with the first two digits of the code number at the top of the survey form, distribute the appropriate survey to each child. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT CARE BE TAKEN TO GIVE EACH CHILD THE CORRECT SURVEY FORM.
2. Each child should also receive a letter from your district explaining the purpose of the survey and urging its completion and return.
3. Save the room envelope and class list to return the completed survey forms.
4. Please request completed survey forms from each child daily and check them off on the class list as they are returned.
5. If there are students who have not returned their survey forms by Friday February 3, 1989, please send an additional survey home and request its return on Monday.
 - a. Blank surveys will be available in your building office.
 - b. PLEASE WRITE THE STUDENT ID NUMBER APPEARING IN THE LEFT MARGIN OF THE CLASS LIST, YOUR ROOM NUMBER, AND YOUR BUILDING NUMBER ON THE SURVEY FORM BEFORE SENDING IT HOME.
 - c. Also include a copy of the follow-up letter provided by your district.
6. All completed survey forms and the class list with names of all students who returned surveys checked off should be returned to your building's office not later than Wednesday February 8, 1989.